

First Presbyterian Church
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
88 Market Street
Salem
Salem County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1154

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

HABS No. NJ-1154

Location: 88 Market Street, Salem, Salem County, New Jersey

Significance: The First Presbyterian Church is typical of the public structures included in Salem's Market Street historic district, which boasts an eclectic range of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century structures, many designed by Philadelphia architects.

Description: This gable-front rectangular block is three bays wide and six bays deep with a prominent 165' center steeple; the polygonal spire has four smaller base spires and two spires each at the end of the side aisles. It is an unusual blend of details: exaggerated Neoclassical molding or cornice treatment is combined with planar Romanesque form and blind arcading in recessed wall panels. The paired central and side doors, and first-floor windows, are divided on all facades by a stone beltcourse from the tall, arched windows above. The former fenestration is one-over-one-light sash set in plain openings; the latter are highly decorative colored glazing topped by ornamental stone hoodmolds.

History: The first Presbyterian church in Salem was established in 1821 after Robert Gibbon Johnson and others were denied permission to worship at the Episcopalian church. The First Presbyterian Church was erected in 1856 according to a design by John McArthur Jr. (1823-90), a Scot who worked out of Philadelphia; A. VanKirk of Trenton was the builder. McArthur apprenticed with an uncle of the same name before establishing a career that spanned 1840 until his death. In the 1850s he designed three Philadelphia hotels and several churches—including the First, Tenth, and Broad Street Presbyterian buildings. He was also chief architect of Philadelphia City Hall in 1869.

Sources:

Market Street Historic District National Register nomination, Salem, New Jersey (10 April 1975).

Tatum, Sandra. and Roger Moss. Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects: 1700-1930. Boston: G.K. Hall and Co., 1985.

Sebold, Kimberly, and Sara Amy Leach. Historic Themes and Resources within the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail: Southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991.

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